



Workforce Strategies: Improving North-South Labour Mobility in the Pacific Northwest

Executive Summary

The movement of people, goods and services between Canada and the United States creates tremendous value on both sides of the border, resulting in the world's largest trading partnership and creating a significant number of jobs in each country. The importance of this bi-national relationship is demonstrated through a long-standing partnership between the western states and provinces. Founded in 1991, the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) is the only statutory, non-partisan, non-profit, bi-national, public/private partnership in North America. The Pacific NorthWest Economic Region is comprised of the U.S. Pacific Northwest (Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington) and Western Canada (Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon and Saskatchewan). The PNWER region is one of the fastest growing regions of North America, representing over \$700 billion in gross regional product and is home to 20 million people. An important component of this relationship and the value it produces on both sides of the border is the movement of workers between Canada and the United States – or labour mobility. Human Resources and Social Development Canada defines labour mobility as “the freedom of workers to practice their occupation wherever opportunities exist.”

In 2006, a PNWER delegation visiting Ottawa engaged in discussions regarding Canadian efforts to reduce barriers to labour mobility in Canada, under the 1994 Agreement on Internal Trade and the 2006 Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA) between the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia. The PNWER Workforce Working Group had focused on labour mobility for engineers in years prior; however discussions in Ottawa, coupled with the recent signing of TILMA and the economic dependencies in the PNWER region sparked interest in examining labour mobility in a broader, bi-national context. The discussion and subsequent investigation of labour mobility was driven by a number of regional factors, including:

- Aging demographics of the region's population;
- Employer demand outstrips supply in some occupations and professions;
- Major Infrastructure projects in the region that are essential to economic development;
- Supporting and enhancing global competitiveness of the region; and
- Regional disaster preparedness and resilience.

These drivers represent both threats and opportunities for the regional economy. The removal of unnecessary barriers to labour mobility in the region for the purposes of accessing labour, public safety and global competitiveness are critical to the region's economic future. With the support of Western Economic Diversification Canada and Citizenship and Immigration Canada, a year-long research study on labour mobility began.

It is with great pride that we now present the results of this research, focused on workforce shortages and labour mobility in the Pacific Northwest, as well as recommendations for addressing these shortages and improving labour mobility in the region.

Aging demographics. Following national trends in the U.S. and Canada, the Pacific Northwest is forecasting significant employment demand created by the need to replace workers that exit the labour force due to retirement. This reduction in available workers creates a demand for improved utilization of the region's human resources. Replacement openings, largely due to retirements will continue to put a strain on the region's employers over the next twenty to thirty years. The majority of PNWER jurisdictions are projecting a significant number of replacement openings as indicated by the below forecasts:

- Alaska's working age population (18-64) is projected to increase steadily between 2005 and 2030; however the state forecasts a tripling of the over 65 population by 2030, primarily consisting of retirees.¹
- The Oregon Employment Department estimates over the next decade, 419,000 job openings in the state will be replacement openings, or openings due to the need to replace a worker who has left the occupation.² In addition to replacement openings, an estimated 245,000 job openings will be created due to economic growth.³
- British Columbia's attrition rate between 2005 and 2015 is an estimated 30.6 percent, equivalent to 652,600 openings.⁴ In that same time period, a combined new job growth and replacement opening, due to permanent attrition, the province is forecasted to add over one million jobs.⁵

The aging population in the region also creates increased demand for services, such as healthcare that adds to employment demand in specific sectors that are already facing shortages of workers. Practices such as telework, telemedicine and outsourcing further blur the boundaries between jurisdictions and nations, by enabling organizations and individuals to access workforce talent and services worldwide. At the same time, increased utilization of these practices by organizations and individuals alike will pose challenges to state and provincial systems.

From delivering daily patient care to regional disaster response capabilities, the healthcare sector and medical practitioners are of particular importance to the region and its residents. Many employees in this sector are required to be licensed to practice in the jurisdictions where they work. Licensure requirements and processes can pose some challenges to labour mobility particularly in a cross-border scenario, including:

- Scope of practice or the tasks in which healthcare practitioners such as physicians, nurses and paramedics can perform in the jurisdiction that they are licensed to work, have not been comprehensively mapped and compared across the region. Many healthcare practitioners are first responders in times of a disaster and must have their credentials verified and are often required to be (provisionally) licensed to practice in the impacted jurisdiction. Understanding

¹ Hunsinger, Eddie, "Population Projections: 2007 to 2030," Alaska Economic Trends, October 2007. Pp. 5 – 9.

² Ayre, Art, "Will Oregon Have Enough Workers." Oregon Employment Department, March 29, 2007, p. 2. Online.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Employment Outlook for British Columbia: COPS BC Unique Scenario for 2005 to 2015. Canadian Occupational Projection System, February 2007. P. 3.

⁵ Ibid.

the scope of practice for first responders in the region can assist in the identification and removal of any unnecessary barriers to labour mobility, particularly in times of disaster.

- Information technology increases access to patient care and medical expertise, however licensure processes and requirements vary among PNWER jurisdictions and pose some challenges to healthcare professionals that want to obtain a license to practice or consult in multiple jurisdictions.

Major Infrastructure Projects. In 2008, current and planned major infrastructure projects in British Columbia and Alberta combined represents over a \$383 billion investment. The Pacific NorthWest Economic Region faces serious challenges associated with staffing large scale infrastructure projects that are essential to supporting the growth and prosperity of the region. These projects require highly skilled workers, such as pipefitters, electricians, welders and engineers. Historically, the demand for these workers in the PNWER region has exceeded the available supply; however in recent months, short-term employment projections for some occupations are reflective of current and forecasted economic conditions, including:

- Declines in commercial and residential building;
- Lay-offs in manufacturing and construction sectors; and
- Reductions in the availability of capital.

Large infrastructure projects, such as the Alaska Natural Gas Pipeline or development in the Alberta Oil Sands create temporary spikes in employment demand that often can not be met or sustained by a local labour market; while at the same time presenting opportunities for the region's workforce. Therefore, labour mobility or the ease in which workers can practice their occupations or professions across jurisdictions becomes increasingly important for staffing these projects. This encompasses provisions for temporary entry for work into the U.S. or Canada; and when applicable, the requirements and process associated with acquiring a license to practice.

Professional & Occupational Licensure. Major infrastructure projects require many workers that are in licensed occupations. These individuals are often required to work in many jurisdictions; on a single project or for continued employment. Occupational licensing requirements are determined and overseen at the state/provincial level, creating variances between PNWER jurisdictions. In addition local labour market conditions and geography influence licensure requirements. For instance, structural engineers working in a geography located in an earthquake zone are required to have competencies in building codes that address this risk. Similarly, a registered nurse working in a labour market with a shortage of physicians may have training and subsequently be licensed to perform duties that a registered nurse in another jurisdiction without a physician shortage may not be taught or licensed to perform. Given that these variances exist, workers seeking a license to practice in another jurisdiction may be required to take additional training or exams. Some of these steps may be warranted given the mission of provincial regulators and state licensing boards to protect public safety. However some provisions could be removed or processes streamlined in order to improve the mobility of licensed professionals in the PNWER region, without compromising public safety or the due diligence process.

Some issues associated with state/provincial licensure are simply attributed to awareness and communication to perspective applicants from jurisdictions in the United States and Canada. Several occurrences were found where a licensing organization did not have information posted to their website that outlines the application process and requirements for workers from the U.S. or Canada.

Temporary Entry. Overlapping many of the above mentioned topics are requirements and processes associated with temporary entry into Canada and the U.S. for the purposes of business travel, work or emergency assistance. The border between Canada and the United States has historically been a model for other international boundaries in defending each nation's sovereignty and increasing mutual security while promoting frequent and friendly travel and trade, and represents the largest trading relationship in the world. North American's global competitiveness requires borders to work effectively and enable smooth and seamless flow of legitimate trade and travel. However, businesses, professional associations and other stakeholders on both sides of the border have expressed serious concern with increasing costs and delays associated with crossing the Canada-U.S. border. Additionally, the Canada-U.S. border is also a factor in regional, cross-border emergency assistance including:

- There is currently no pre-clearance program that enables seamless cross-border response of first responders or other support personnel needed in times of emergency; and
- Indications that Regional Mutual Assistance Agreements may need further testing to ensure that they are able to be implemented as designed under difficult circumstances that may occur in a disaster or emergency – particularly when the incident requires law enforcement to temporarily close the Canada – U.S. border.

The Pacific Northwest Economic Region has a long history of collaboration in economic development. In addition to addressing unnecessary barriers to labour mobility; it is imperative that the region also focus on long-term global competitiveness of our workforce.

Investing in Future Generations. Many high demand occupations, such as healthcare practitioners and skilled trades require individuals to complete high school and obtain some form of post-secondary education or training. In order to ensure that the region's residents have the ability to fully participate in the economy of the Pacific Northwest, efforts to improve high school graduation rates, math and literacy attainment, availability of technical training and apprenticeships and increasing capacity in high demand degrees are all critical to long term success.

In order to improve labour mobility in the PNWER region, the following recommendations have been proposed.

Skilled Trades & Major Infrastructure Projects. In order to better understand the opportunities presented by major infrastructure projects in the region; as well as the opportunities for the region's workforce, the following next step recommendation has been proposed.

- Key stakeholders should be brought together with state, provincial and federal officials to address opportunities for labour market agreements to reduce delays and costs, prior to an Alaska Natural Gas Pipeline construction project.

Professional Licensing. Professional regulators and state boards that oversee licensure for engineers in the PNWER region have made great strides in improving labour mobility in the PNWER region and the U.S. and Canada at-large. The following recommendations have been developed, with their input to further their efforts in the region; as well as to highlight their process for other regulated professions and their respective governing bodies.

- Remove the requirement for Canadian citizenship or permanent residency in provincial legislation, regulations or policy as it applies to U.S. P.Eng. licensure applicants.

- Canadian Professional Engineering Associations should develop a policy to accept the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying Record in lieu of transcripts, resumes and references for Professional Engineers.
- State Boards and Provincial Regulators with the support of legislators should continue their work on harmonization of the criteria for mobility of engineers with in the PNWER region.
- Leverage the work on reciprocity for professional engineers as a model for facilitating greater mobility for other regulated professions and occupations.

Awareness. Information and communication are critical components for improving regional labour mobility; therefore the following recommendations were developed.

- Provincial regulators and state boards should have a web page dedicated to outlining specific requirements and processes for licensure applicants from Canada and the U.S.
- Progress on the recommendations encompassed in this report; as well as other regional efforts to improve labour mobility should be accessible via a centralized website, to support stakeholder awareness and provide opportunities to participate. In addition, the website should contain links to organizations that have information or responsibilities related to labour mobility in the region.

Temporary Entry of Business Persons. In order to better facilitate the movement of business persons in the region and reduce the burden on Canada-U.S. border officials, the following recommendations have been developed.

- Develop a fact sheet on NAFTA status/TN-1 visa renewal application process for border agents to provide to individuals seeking this status in either country or submitting a renewal application at a port-of-entry. By providing this information to individuals and encouraging renewal/extension applications to be submitted to a processing center rather than the port-of-entry assists in reducing border wait times.
- Implement a process that would enable Canadians seeking TN status in the U.S. to submit application materials in advance for review for completeness prior to making the journey to a port-of-entry. This pre-screening process for applications would reduce uncertainty associated with submission and review at the port-of-entry and decrease border wait times by minimizing onsite assessment of legitimate business travel.

Mutual Assistance & Labour Mobility. In order to consider streamlining licensure processes for first responders or developing reciprocity agreements in the region, the scope of practice for these professionals must first be understood.

- Assess the scope of practice of first responders in PNWER jurisdictions in order to identify similarities and differences. This information and effort is vital to facilitate and streamline regional disaster response by first responders that require a license to practice, such as nurses, physicians and paramedics.

Furthermore, in order to ensure that the region is prepared to address a disaster situation where cross-border assistance is needed, the following recommendations have been developed:

- Inventory all cross-border/cross-jurisdiction mutual assistance agreements in the Pacific Northwest region and make the inventory available online.
- In advance of the 2010 Olympic Games in British Columbia, implement a NEXUS First Responder pilot program that supports pre-clearance of first responders and other support personnel necessary to aid in a disaster or emergency situation where cross-border personnel, services or equipment is required.
- Test cross-border mutual assistance agreements through a series of cross-border exercises.

In conclusion, we would like to thank the individuals that provided valuable insights on the topic of labour mobility that helped shape this report and recommendations. We look forward to continued discussions on this important topic and working with you to implement these recommendations in the months ahead.

This list of recommendations; as well as a timeline for implementation and organizations that are best suited to support the implementation of these proposed recommendations is provided on page 70 of the full report.

Summary of Recommendations for Improving North-South Labour Mobility in the Pacific Northwest

Category/Number	Report Recommendations	Timeframe for Implementation	Responsible Organizations
<div style="position: relative; height: 40px;"> <div style="position: absolute; top: 0; right: 0; text-align: right;"> 3 BUH 1-9-09 </div> <div style="position: absolute; bottom: 0; left: 0; background-color: black; color: white; padding: 2px;"> EXHIBIT 1 DATE </div> </div> Temporary Entry (#1)	Develop a fact sheet on NAFTA status/TN-1 visa renewal application process for border agents to provide to individuals seeking this status in either country or submitting a renewal application at a port of entry. The fact sheet should instruct these individuals to submit their reapplication/extension paperwork via mail. By providing this information to individuals and encouraging applications to be submitted to a processing center rather than the port-of-entry assists in reducing border wait times.	Short term	Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).
Mutual Assistance (#10)	Inventory of all cross-border/cross-jurisdiction mutual aid agreements in the Pacific Northwest region and make the inventory accessible online.	Short term	PNWER
Mutual Assistance (#12)	In advance of the 2010 Olympic Games in British Columbia, implement a NEXUS First Responder pilot program that supports pre-clearance of first responders and other support personnel to aid in a disaster or emergency situation where cross-border personnel, services or equipment is required.	Short term	CBSA, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, state, provincial and local authorities.
Temporary Entry (#2)	Implement a process that would enable Canadians seeking TN status in the U.S. to submit applications in advance for review for completeness prior to making the journey to a port-of-entry. This pre-screening process for applications would reduce uncertainty associated with application submission at the port of entry and decrease border wait times by minimizing onsite assessment of legitimate business travel.	Medium Term	U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)
Professions & Occupations (#3)	Remove the requirement for Canadian citizenship or permanent residency in provincial legislation, regulations or policy as it applies to U.S. P.Eng. licensure applicants.	Medium Term	Provincial Regulators
Professions & Occupations (#4)	Provincial regulators and state boards should have a web page dedicated to outlining specific requirements and processes for licensure applicants from the U.S. and Canada. Providing this information would greatly assist individuals seeking licensure in neighboring jurisdictions.	Medium Term	State Boards (applied to information for Canadian applicants) and Provincial Regulators (applied to information for U.S applicants)
Professions & Occupations (#5)	Canadian Professional Engineering Associations should develop a policy to accept the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES) Record in lieu of transcripts, resume and references for P.E.'s. This will save administrative time without affecting public safety.	Medium Term	Canadian Professional Engineering Associations

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Summary of Recommendations for Improving North-South Labour Mobility in the Pacific Northwest

Professions & Occupations (#6)	State Boards and Provincial Regulators with the support of their legislators should continue their work on harmonization of the criteria for mobility of engineers, within the PNWER region.	Medium Term	State Boards and Provincial Regulators PNWER, Licensing and regulatory bodies, workforce development organizations, unions, employers, state and provincial government and federal governments
Professions & Occupations (#8)	Key stakeholders should be brought together with state, provincial and federal officials to address opportunities for labour market agreements to reduce delays and costs, prior to an Alaska Natural Gas Pipeline construction project.	Medium Term	Pacific Northwest Border Health Alliance, U.S. Health and Human Services, Department of Homeland Security, Public Safety Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, State and Provincial agencies and regulators and PNWER
Mutual Assistance (#11)	Assess the scope of practice of first responders in PNWER jurisdictions in order to identify similarities and differences. This information and effort is vital to facilitate and streamline regional disaster response.	Medium Term	PNWER, State and provincial agencies, Public Safety Canada and Department of Homeland Security
Mutual Assistance (#13)	Test cross-border mutual assistance agreements through a series of cross-border exercises.	Medium Term	
Professions & Occupations (#7)	Leverage the work on reciprocity for professional engineers as a model for facilitating greater mobility for other regulated professions and occupations.	Long Term	Other Professional Associations/State boards in the PNWER Region
Professions & Occupations (#9)	Progress on the recommendations encompassed in this report, as well as other regional efforts to improve labour mobility should be accessible via a centralized website, to support stakeholder awareness and provide opportunities to participate. In addition, the website should contain links to organizations that have information or responsibilities related to labour mobility in the region.	Long Term	PNWER

The above recommendations have been developed to support improved labour mobility in the PNWER region. Information has been added to the recommendations in this section pertaining to organizations that are best suited to implement the proposed recommendations (Responsible parties) and well as recommended timeline for implementation. Timeframe for implementation is referenced as short term (up to 12 months), medium term (between 12 and 24 months) or long term (24+ months).